

REMARKS

Claims 1-17, 19, and 20 are pending in this application, of which, claims 1 and 19 are independent. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 17, cancelled claim 18, and added claims 19 and 20, which are fully supported by the Specification, e.g., at page 4, lines 1-7. Thus, the new claims add no new matter. Applicants have also amended the Specification to correct a clear typographical error.

35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claim 17 has been rejected as being allegedly indefinite. Applicants have amended claim 17 to provide proper antecedent for the recited elements, and request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-11 and 18 have been rejected as being allegedly anticipated by Lamb (U.S. Patent No. 6,260,220). Applicants traverse this rejection for the following reasons.

Lamb discloses a surgical table extending along a longitudinal axis and suspended between vertically extending head and foot posts. The table-top is coupled to each of the posts by means of gimbals having perpendicular rotation axes and is laterally rotatable about its longitudinal axis. The head and foot ends of the table may be independently raised or lowered as needed to position the patient. See, e.g., Lamb at col. 3, lines 21-26, and col. 8, lines 3-17. The surgical table top 10 of Lamb includes a foam core 34a, 34b and peripheral side members 32, 38 to support the load of the table and patient between the head and foot posts 12, 14. See Lamb at col. 3, line 63, to col. 4, line 24.

In contrast to the surgical table of Lamb, amended claim 1 recites a table-top segment of a patient supporting table that is pivotably coupled to the main carrying structure about a horizontal axis (see originally filed claim 18 and the Specification at page 4, lines 5-15). Coupling of the main carrying structure to the table-top segment can be achieved by using coupling parts as described in the Specification at page 5, lines 7 to 8, for example. Lamb fails

to disclose the combination of a main carrying structure and a table-top segment of a patient supporting table pivotably coupled to the main carrying structure about a horizontal axis as more clearly recited in amended claim 1. In fact, the Office Action includes no statement addressing the elements recited in originally filed claim 18. Claims 2-17 depend from claim 1 and are allowable with it.

Applicants further submit that Lamb fails to disclose a multi-part carrying structure for supporting a patient including at least a main carrying structure having a narrow support surface and a column detachably supporting the main carrying structure; wherein the column is the only structure supporting the combined load of the main carrying structure and the patient as recited in new claims 19 and 20.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 9-12 have also been rejected as being allegedly unpatentable over Lamb in view of Kirchgeorg et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,771,513). Claims 2 and 12-17 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Lamb in view of Connor (U.S. Patent No. 5,628,257). The Kirchgeorg, Connor, and Lamb references, taken alone or in any combination, nowhere disclose or even suggest a carrying structure apparatus for supporting a body part of a patient of amended claim 1 including "a main carrying structure having a narrow support surface; a first additional part having a support surface, the first additional part being detachably connected to the main carrying structure, wherein when the first additional part is connected to the main carrying structure a first combined support surface including the narrow support surface of the main carrying structure and the support surface of the first additional part is wider than the narrow support surface of the main carrying structure; and a table-top segment of a patient supporting table pivotably coupled to the main carrying structure about a horizontal axis." Claims 2-17 depend from claim 1 and are allowable with it.

With respect to claims 19 and 20, applicants submit that none of the cited references, considered alone or in any combination disclose or suggest a multi-part carrying structure for supporting a patient including at least a main carrying structure having a narrow support surface

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and a column detachably supporting the main carrying structure; wherein the main part and the first additional part are produced from a material having a high degree of transparency for X-rays, and wherein the column is the only structure supporting the combined load of the main carrying structure and the patient." As described above, the surgical table top of Lamb is suspended between two vertically extending posts and includes supporting surfaces and side members extending the length of the table-top between the posts. Modifying Lamb to include a table-top segment of a patient supporting table pivotably coupled to the main carrying structure about a horizontal axis represents a comprehensive change to the principal of operation of the surgical table of Lamb and accordingly, Lamb's disclosure is simply insufficient to render claims 1 or claim 19 *prima facie* obvious.

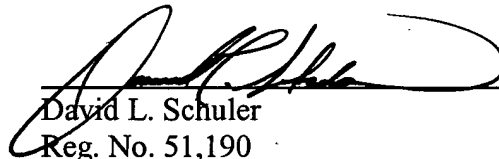
Allowance of all claims is respectfully solicited.

Please apply any other charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 06-1050, referencing attorney docket number 18836-005001.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: _____

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